

Effective Communication between Ustadz and Santri in Overcoming Bullying Cases in the Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School

Rokibullah

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

Email: rokibullah06@gmail.com

Abstract

Bullying has become a critical issue in educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), where it undermines students' psychological well-being and contradicts the moral values upheld by these institutions. This study aims to examine the role of effective communication between ustadz (Islamic teachers) and santri (students) in addressing bullying cases at Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School. The research employs a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of communication practices within the pesantren context. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions involving ustadz, students, and school administrators. The findings reveal that ustadz play a strategic role as role models, moral educators, and mediators in conflict resolution. Effective communication strategies such as two-way communication, empathetic interaction, the integration of religious values, and the use of group discussion forums (halaqah) significantly contribute to resolving bullying cases. These approaches not only encourage perpetrators to recognize and change their behavior but also help victims rebuild self-confidence and feel supported. Furthermore, effective communication fosters a harmonious and conducive environment within the pesantren, strengthening social bonds and promoting Islamic values of brotherhood. This study highlights that communication grounded in empathy, openness, and religious principles serves as an effective tool for social transformation and conflict resolution in Islamic boarding schools.

Keywords: bullying; effective communication; Islamic boarding school; ustadz; santri

Introduction

The phenomenon of bullying has become a serious issue facing various educational institutions worldwide. Bullying, whether verbal, physical, or social, has profound impacts on victims, including psychological disorders, low self-confidence, and the potential for dropping out of school. A report from the World Health Organization (WHO) states that more than 30% of students worldwide experience bullying in various forms (Nelson et al., 2024). In Asia, bullying in schools is a serious concern because it is considered to affect the quality of education and the mental well-being of students (Kikuchi et al., 2024). In Indonesia, cases of bullying in educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), continue to emerge and are often not publicly revealed (Hadi, 2024). The Islamic boarding school environment, which should be a place for character education and the formation of noble morals, is also not immune to this problem.

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), as Islamic-based educational institutions in Indonesia, play a strategic role in shaping a generation with noble character. However, several studies have shown that they face similar challenges to public schools, particularly regarding social dynamics among students. A 2020 study by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) revealed an increase in reports of violence between students, including in religious-based educational institutions (Tri, 2024). The dormitory environment, which forces students to live together for extended periods, often becomes

a fertile ground for conflict, including bullying. Bullying in Islamic boarding schools has distinctive characteristics, such as abuse of power by senior students against junior Students (Alhakiim & Bakri, 2024), and is often disguised as a matter of guidance or tradition.

In the context of the Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School, bullying not only creates rifts between students but also undermines the Islamic values that underpin the school's education. Several cases show that perpetrators use seniority or dormitory traditions to legitimize their actions, while victims often feel isolated and reluctant to report the incident for fear of ostracization or retaliation. This situation highlights the need for a more strategic and effective approach to addressing bullying in Islamic boarding schools.

Effective communication between ustadz and students is one reliable approach to addressing this problem (Cholily et al., 2024). As central figures in the Islamic boarding school education system, ustadz hold a strategic position to act as mediators, counselors, and educators for students. Previous research has consistently shown that communication plays a vital role in resolving conflicts and building harmonious relationships in educational settings. For instance, Chusyairi et al. (2024) found that empathetic and open communication helps resolve student conflicts in Islamic schools. Similarly, Zakiyullah & Sofa (2024) highlighted the effectiveness of persuasive communication by ustadz in guiding students toward positive behavioral change. Other studies (Awalliah et al., 2024; Mukarromah et al., 2024) reinforce that two-way communication and empathy are key to building trust and addressing bullying. However, most existing studies focus on general Islamic education settings rather than specifically examining pesantren with their unique hierarchical social dynamics. This gap underscores the need for context-specific research on effective communication strategies in Islamic boarding schools.

Both studies demonstrate that effective communication can be a powerful tool in building positive interpersonal relationships in faith-based educational environments. However, there is limited research specifically examining how effective communication can be applied to address bullying in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), particularly in Indonesia. This is the urgency of this research. As institutions that integrate religious education and social life, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) require a communication approach that not only emphasizes Islamic values but is also relevant to the social dynamics of the students.

The novelty of this research lies in its in-depth exploration of effective communication practices between religious teachers (ustadz) and students (santri) in the context of resolving bullying cases at the Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School. This research focuses not only on describing the phenomenon but also on exploring the communication strategies employed by the ustadz to build trust, foster openness, and instill positive values in the students. In other words, this research provides a new perspective on how communication can be used as a tool for social transformation in Islamic boarding schools.

The benefits of this research can be divided into two categories: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research is expected to add to the body of knowledge on effective communication in faith-based educational institutions, particularly in the context of conflict resolution. This research can also serve as a reference for future researchers interested in examining social dynamics in Islamic boarding schools. Practically, the results of this study can provide guidance for Islamic boarding school administrators, religious teachers, and other educators in addressing bullying issues more effectively. By understanding how effective communication can be implemented, it is hoped that Islamic boarding schools can create a more conducive, harmonious, and bullying-free environment.

Overall, this research aims to address the urgent need for effective strategies to address bullying in Islamic boarding schools. By leveraging the strategic role of religious teachers and the power of Islamic-based communication, it is hoped that this research can provide applicable solutions and support the creation of an Islamic boarding school environment that aligns with Islamic values.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. This approach was chosen because it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon within a specific context, namely effective communication between religious teachers (ustadz) and students (santri) in addressing bullying cases within the Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School. As a case study, this research focuses on a comprehensive exploration of the communication practices, strategies, and challenges that occur within the context of the Islamic boarding school.

Research Design

This research design is based on exploratory descriptive, which aims to describe in detail how ustadz and students communicate in the process of conflict resolution related to bullying. The main focus of this research design is to understand the dynamics of communication between actors in the Islamic boarding school environment, identify factors that influence the success or failure of communication, and explore the strategies implemented by ustadz in guiding students. This research is also designed to provide a holistic understanding, from both the ustadz and students' perspectives, so that the data obtained can comprehensively reflect social reality.

Research Location and Subjects

This research was conducted at the Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School, located at Jl. Saputra 9, Tuparev, Kedawung. It is an Islamic boarding school with an Islamic-based education system and a dormitory for students. This boarding school was chosen because of its unique relationship structure between ustadz (teacher) and students, and the history of bullying cases that provided a relevant context for this research. This location also allowed the researchers to explore interpersonal interactions that occur directly within the boarding and learning environment of the boarding school. The research subjects involved several categories of informants, namely:

1. Ustadz: Ustadz act as spiritual guides and educators at Islamic boarding schools. They are chosen because of their direct experience in handling conflicts and bullying among students.
2. Students: Students who have been involved, either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses, in bullying cases. They are expected to provide perspective on how communication with the religious teacher influenced the situation.
3. Islamic boarding school management: The party responsible for the policies and daily management of the Islamic boarding school, to provide views on the procedures or policies implemented in handling bullying cases.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, where informants were selected based on their relevance and involvement in bullying cases and communication processes at Islamic boarding schools. Informants were selected selectively to ensure the data obtained was relevant to the research focus.

Data collection technique

To dig up in-depth and comprehensive data, this study uses the following data collection techniques:

a. Participatory Observation

Observations were conducted by directly observing interactions between religious teachers and students during various Islamic boarding school activities, such as religious study sessions, group discussions, and daily activities in the dormitory. The researcher acted as a participant observer to understand the communication patterns employed, including how the religious teachers handled conflict or provided advice to students. These observations aimed to capture dynamics not always revealed in interviews, such as body language, intonation, and social context.

b. In-depth Interview

Interviews were conducted with religious teachers (ustadz), students (santri), and Islamic boarding school administrators. In-depth interviews aimed to explore the experiences, perspectives, and communication strategies used by the ustadz in addressing bullying. Students were also interviewed to understand how they responded to the ustadz's communication and how it influenced their behavioral changes. The interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility in exploring relevant topics.

c. Documentation

Documentation was conducted by collecting data in the form of case notes, Islamic boarding school policies, or other documents related to handling bullying in Islamic boarding schools. This data was used to supplement information obtained from observations and interviews and to provide a factual basis for the policies or measures implemented by the Islamic boarding school.

d. Discussion Group Directed (Focus Group Discussion)

FGD was conducted for dig opinion collective from group students about the dynamics of bullying and how communication from religious teacher influence atmosphere environment Islamic boarding schools. The FGD also involved religious

teachers to discuss strategies implemented to create effective communication in Islamic boarding schools.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Ustadz in the Islamic Boarding School Environment

Ustadz as a Role Model in the Life of Students

Ustadz (Islamic teachers) in Islamic boarding schools play a central role as role models for their students. As authoritative figures in education, ustadz are responsible not only for imparting religious knowledge but also for providing concrete examples of how Islamic values are applied in daily life (Jannah, 2024). The ustadz's exemplary behavior encompasses spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. In the spiritual dimension, ustadz demonstrate consistency in worship, such as maintaining congregational prayer, reciting the Quran, and remembering God. This behavior serves as a model for students to emulate and internalize pious values.

In the moral dimension, the religious teacher serves as a role model for fairness, honesty, and patience. This exemplary behavior is not only seen in what is taught, but also in how the religious teacher acts in various situations. For example, the religious teacher's patience in dealing with problematic students provides a concrete illustration of how to face challenges in an Islamic manner. The social dimension is also important, where the religious teacher demonstrates a friendly, inclusive attitude and is able to build good relationships with both the students and the Islamic boarding school community. Exemplary behavior in this dimension helps students understand the importance of building harmonious relationships in a pluralistic society.

Research by (Hermawanto et al., (2024) shows that students tend to imitate the behavior of religious teachers (ustadz) whom they consider role models. This includes how they worship, speak, and interact. Furthermore, research by (Zakiyullah & Sofa, 2024) found that the exemplary behavior of religious teachers increases the effectiveness of teaching and learning in Islamic boarding schools. By serving as role models, religious teachers not only teach theory but also inspire students to develop Islamic character. In this context, the role of religious teachers as role models is key in shaping a generation of faithful and noble character.

The Function of Ustadz in Educating Morals, Instilling Religious Values, and Guiding Interpersonal Relationships

Ustadz (Islamic teachers) in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role in educating morals, instilling religious values, and guiding students' interpersonal relationships. In educating morals, ustadz play a role in shaping the students' character through a personal and systematic approach. This moral learning is carried out through direct teaching, habituation, and role modeling. Values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and patience are taught to students to develop individuals with good character and noble morals.

The role of the ustadz in instilling religious values focuses on teaching the core teachings of Islam, including monotheism, worship, and morals (Nurmila & Silahuddin, 2024). In addition to providing theoretical knowledge, the ustadz also guides the students in their religious practices, such as congregational prayer, reading the Quran, and participating in religious studies. This guidance ensures that religious values are not only learned but also practiced in daily life.

In guiding interpersonal relationships, the ustadz helps students interact effectively within the Islamic boarding school environment. This includes the ability to cooperate, resolve conflicts, and respect differences. As a mediator, the ustadz plays a role in resolving conflicts between students in a wise and fair manner. The ustadz's open and empathetic attitude helps create a harmonious Islamic boarding school environment.

Research by (Tohirin & Nurfuadi, 2024) confirms that the function of ustadz in educating morals and instilling religious values is very effective in forming the religious and tolerant personality of students.

Ustadz's Strategy in Building Trust with Students

Trust between ustadz and students is a crucial foundation of educational relationships in Islamic boarding schools (Munajat et al., 2024). To build this trust, ustadz employ various strategies aimed at creating open, safe, and respectful relationships. One key strategy is to lead by example in actions and speech. Students tend to trust ustadz more who consistently uphold the Islamic values they teach, such as honesty, fairness, and patience. This exemplary behavior strengthens the students' belief that the ustadz is a reliable figure.

Another strategy is to demonstrate empathy toward students. The teacher strives to understand the students' needs, feelings, and challenges without hasty judgment. This empathetic attitude makes students feel valued and supported, making them more open in expressing problems or aspirations. Furthermore, the teacher builds trust through open and inclusive communication. The teacher listens to students' opinions and provides space for discussion, creating a psychologically safe environment. This also involves providing constructive feedback, where the teacher offers constructive advice without applying undue pressure.

Research by (Awalliah et al., 2024) shows that empathy and open communication are key to building trust between religious teachers and students. The study found that students were more open to discussions and receiving advice from religious teachers who showed concern for their development. By implementing this strategy, religious teachers not only built harmonious relationships with students but also helped create a conducive learning environment. This trust became the foundation that enabled religious teachers to effectively guide students in all aspects of their lives, including spiritual, academic, and social development.

Effective Communication Strategies in Overcoming Bullying

Two-Way Communication Approach (Listening and Responding)

A two-way communication approach is one of the most effective strategies for addressing bullying in Islamic boarding schools (Thahir, 2024). In this approach, the ustadz (teacher) not only acts as a provider of advice or information but also as an active listener who deeply understands the students' problems. Listening and responding are key to building healthy communication between ustadz and students. When students face problems, such as bullying, they need space to express their feelings and experiences without feeling judged. In this case, the ustadz must provide full attention, demonstrate concern, and provide relevant responses.

Through active listening, the ustadz can understand the root of the problem from the perspective of the students, both the victim and the perpetrator. This way, the ustadz can provide a response that not only provides solutions but also encourages the students to reflect on their actions. This two-way communication creates an emotionally safe atmosphere, allowing the students to feel valued and more open to speaking up.

Research by (Devi, (2024) shows that two-way communication in Islamic boarding schools increases the effectiveness of learning and fostering students, especially in addressing social conflicts such as bullying. When religious teachers are able to listen empathetically and respond wisely, students feel emotionally supported, making it easier for them to change in a more positive direction. With two-way communication, religious teachers not only resolve bullying but also strengthen interpersonal relationships with students, ultimately creating a more harmonious Islamic boarding school environment.

Empathetic Communication Techniques: Understanding the Students' Perspective

Empathetic communication techniques are approaches that place the ustadz in a position to deeply understand the perspective of the students, both as victims and perpetrators of bullying (Ahmadi et al., 2024). In this technique, the ustadz attempts to see the problem from the students' perspective, understand their emotions, and feel what they are experiencing. Empathy allows the ustadz to establish a closer relationship with the students, create a sense of security, and minimize the fear or shame often experienced by students involved in bullying cases.

Empathy isn't just about listening to complaints; it also involves acknowledging the student's feelings. For example, if a student who is being bullied feels anxious or depressed, the teacher can demonstrate understanding by saying, "I understand this must be very difficult for you." This approach helps the student feel validated and less alone. In the case of bullies, empathy is also necessary to understand the reasons behind their behavior, such as family problems or pressure from the environment.

Research by Mukarromah et al., (2024) shows that empathy from religious teachers is a key factor in building strong relationships with students. When religious teachers demonstrate genuine concern, students tend to be more open to receiving guidance and advice. In the context of bullying, empathy helps religious teachers provide solutions that not only punish the perpetrators but also help them understand the impact of their actions

on others. Through empathetic communication, religious teachers can create positive changes in both victims and perpetrators, as well as build a boarding school environment full of mutual respect.

Using Religious Values to Raise Awareness of Bullies and Support Victims

Using religious values is a highly effective strategy for addressing bullying in Islamic boarding schools, given that Islamic boarding schools are environments based on Islamic teachings (Anggraeni et al., 2024). In this approach, religious teachers use religious teachings to provide perpetrators with a deeper understanding of the harmful impacts of their actions, while also providing moral and spiritual support to victims. Religious values, such as compassion, justice, and brotherhood, serve as the foundation for building awareness and behavioral change.

For perpetrators of bullying, religious teachers can teach the importance of avoiding oppressive behavior and respecting the rights of others, as taught in the Quran and Hadith. For example, perpetrators are encouraged to understand that bullying is a form of injustice that not only harms the victim but also leads to sin. Emphasizing the values of repentance and self-improvement is also an important part of this approach.

For victims, religious values can be used to rebuild self-confidence and inner peace. Ustadz (Islamic teachers) provide support by reminding them that they are not alone and that God is always with those who are patient. By providing spiritual encouragement, victims can feel stronger in facing their situation.

Research by Fadli et al., (2024) confirms that a religious values-based approach is highly effective in addressing social conflict in Islamic boarding schools. Religious values not only provide a moral framework but also foster a sense of responsibility and solidarity among students. With this approach, religious teachers can create profound changes in both perpetrators and victims of bullying, creating a more harmonious environment.

Utilizing Group Forums (Halaqah or Discussions) to Discuss Norms and the Importance of Brotherhood

Group forums, such as halaqah (Islamic gatherings) or discussion groups, are one tool that religious teachers (ustadz) can utilize to address bullying in Islamic boarding schools (Oktaviani, 2021). These forums provide a space for students to engage in open dialogue about Islamic norms and the importance of maintaining brotherhood among themselves. In these forums, the ustadz acts as a facilitator, guiding the discussion and providing insights based on religious values.

Halaqah, or group discussions, allow students to share experiences, including stories about the impact of bullying, both as victims and witnesses. Through this approach, students can understand others' perspectives and recognize the importance of mutual respect. The religious teacher can direct the discussion to relevant topics, such as the value of ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), the prohibition of injustice, and the importance of mutual assistance.

This forum can also be used to build collective awareness of shared responsibility in creating a safe and harmonious environment. For example, religious teachers can motivate students to play an active role in preventing bullying by reminding them that everyone is a brother and sister who must look after one another. Group discussions also provide opportunities for religious teachers to identify potential conflicts and propose solutions before problems escalate.

Research by Rahmatiah et al., (2024) shows that group discussions in Islamic boarding schools are effective in increasing students' understanding and awareness of moral and social values. By utilizing halaqah (Islamic group discussions), religious teachers not only provide solutions to bullying but also build stronger solidarity and brotherhood among students. This approach is one of the most inclusive ways to create positive change in the Islamic boarding school environment.

Impact of Effective Communication

The Impact of Effective Communication on Bullies: Realizing Mistakes and Stopping the Act

Effective communication has a significant impact on bullies, particularly in helping them recognize their mistakes and stop their negative behavior. Ustadz (Islamic teachers) who employ empathetic and constructive communication can create a dialogue that allows bullies to reflect on their behavior. Through this approach, the ustadz not only punishes the bullies but also guides them to understand the negative impact their actions have on the victims and their surroundings.

In the communication process, religious teachers often use active listening techniques and provide feedback aimed at increasing the perpetrator's self-awareness. For example, religious teachers can encourage perpetrators to reflect on how they would want to be treated if they were in the victim's position. This approach helps perpetrators understand other perspectives, allowing them to better empathize and recognize their mistakes.

Effective communication also plays a role in motivating perpetrators to improve themselves. Ustadz (Islamic teachers) can emphasize religious values, such as the importance of repentance and behavioral change, to encourage perpetrators to stop bullying. Through effective communication, perpetrators feel supported in their efforts to change without feeling shamed or judged.

Research by Garandau et al. (2016) shows that communication based on empathy and fairness can significantly help bullies change their behavior. When bullies feel valued and given the opportunity to improve themselves, they are more likely to abandon negative behavior and contribute positively to the Islamic boarding school environment.

The Impact of Effective Communication on Bullying Victims: Building Self-Confidence and Feeling Supported

For victims of bullying, effective communication is key to restoring self-confidence and providing the support they need. Victims of bullying often experience low self-

esteem, anxiety, and trauma as a result of the treatment they receive. In these situations, a religious teacher who can communicate empathetically and attentively can help victims feel that they are not alone in facing these challenges.

Through open communication, religious teachers can create a safe environment for victims to talk about their experiences. This approach allows victims to release their emotional burdens and feel heard. The religious teachers can also validate victims' feelings by acknowledging that what they are experiencing is a serious issue that requires attention.

Furthermore, religious teachers can use effective communication to rebuild victims' self-confidence. This can be done by providing moral support and positive reinforcement. For example, religious teachers can remind victims of their potential and positive values, helping them feel stronger and more confident. Applying religious values, such as the belief that every individual has honor and dignity in the eyes of God, can also encourage victims to recover from their traumatic experiences.

Research by Firmansyah et al. (2024) shows that empathetic communication from educators, such as religious teachers, helps victims of bullying recover emotionally and boosts their self-confidence. By feeling supported, victims are not only able to overcome trauma but also become more resilient individuals in facing future challenges.

The Impact of Effective Communication in the Islamic Boarding School Environment: Creating a Harmonious Atmosphere and Increasing Togetherness

Within the Islamic boarding school environment, effective communication plays a significant role in creating a harmonious atmosphere and fostering togetherness among students. Bullying often damages social relationships and creates tension within the Islamic boarding school community. However, with effective communication from the ustadz (teacher), this problem can be addressed, creating a more conducive environment for learning and development.

Effective communication enables ustadz to resolve conflicts fairly, both between perpetrators and victims and among other groups of students. Through a dialogical approach, ustadz can engage all parties in discussion and seek joint solutions. This process not only resolves problems but also strengthens social bonds among students, as they are encouraged to understand and respect each other.

Furthermore, good communication is also used to instill the values of brotherhood and togetherness in Islamic boarding schools. Ustadz often utilize group discussion forums, or halaqah, to discuss the importance of maintaining harmony within the community. By emphasizing values such as ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) and mutual assistance, students are encouraged to create a supportive environment.

Research by Putri Ayu Munawaroh Nasution et al. (2024) shows that effective communication from educators can create positive change in the social dynamics of Islamic boarding schools. A harmonious environment not only supports the learning process but also provides a sense of comfort for the entire Islamic boarding school community. With effective communication, Islamic boarding schools can become places

that not only provide academic education but also build strong social values among students.

Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that this study demonstrates how the role of ustadz in the Islamic boarding school environment, especially at the Darul Ulum Ad-Diniyah Islamic Boarding School, is very important in creating effective learning and character development of students. As a role model, ustadz not only functions as a teacher, but also a real example in the application of Islamic values, both in spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. This exemplary behavior encourages students to imitate the ustadz's behavior, thereby strengthening the formation of Islamic character. In addition, the role of ustadz in educating morals, instilling religious values, and guiding interpersonal relationships has been proven to make a significant contribution to the creation of a conducive, harmonious Islamic boarding school environment that supports the development of students' personalities.

The ustadz's strategy of building trust with students through role models, empathy, and open communication has a positive impact on interpersonal relationships. This trust serves as the primary foundation that enables the ustadz to provide effective guidance, across academic, spiritual, and social dimensions. In the context of addressing bullying, the ustadz's effective communication, including a two-way communication approach, empathy techniques, the use of religious values, and discussion forums, has been shown to help perpetrators recognize their mistakes and encourage behavioral change. Meanwhile, victims feel supported, thereby restoring their self-confidence.

The impact of effective communication is also felt within the Islamic boarding school environment, where a harmonious atmosphere and togetherness among students are enhanced. This conducive environment not only supports the learning process but also creates a community of mutual respect and support. Thus, this study emphasizes the strategic importance of the ustadz (Islamic teachers) in building meaningful relationships with students to create a generation with noble character and capable of living harmoniously within society.

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